

Poland national day

Poland and Japan, close as never before

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AMBASSADOR OF POLAND

On the auspicious occasion of the Constitution Day of the Republic of Poland I would like to extend my greetings and pay respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the people of Japan. In Poland we celebrate Constitution Day on May 3, same as Japan, in remembrance of the 1791 adoption of the basic legal act by the Parliament of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the first legal act of its type in Europe and the world's second oldest constitution. At the time it was a significant achievement of the Polish Enlightenment thinkers.

Today Poland is a member of numerous international organizations like the European Union, NATO, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the United Nations, and our voice is heard not only in Europe but also all over the world. As the ambassador of Poland to Japan I am proud to recognize that since the last few years Poland has become also more present and visible in Japan. I am very pleased that the cooperation between our countries blossoms in all fields to our mutual benefit.

We assess the political relations between Poland and Japan as excellent. An important element in our bilateral relations was the first-ever visit of the Polish Minister of National Defense Tomasz Siemoniak to Japan, which took place in March. Poland has been recently strengthening the dialogue with Japan on security issues and regional cooperation. I also welcome the growing intensity of parliamentary contacts between our countries.

In fact, Poland is a longtime friend of Japan. Although geographically distant, we have become increasingly close. Many things bind us historically, and we share the common values of democracy, free market economy and human rights that bring us together. Based on these, we see prospects for political cooperation with Japan also in third countries, for example, in the countries of the EU Eastern Partnership. We are very pleased with the V4 + Japan formula of cooperation between the Visegrad Group countries and Japan. In February, the Embassy of Poland, the country which holds the presidency of the



Nature and heritage: Once hunted to extinction in the wild, the European bison, or wisent, has been reintroduced from captivity into Bialowieza Forest, which straddles the border between Belarus and Poland. Right: Built in the 17th century and remodeled in the 18th century, the Lazienki Palace, also called the Palace on the Water, is a neoclassical structure in the Lazienki Park, the largest park in Warsaw. A.OLEJ, K. KOBUSTRAVELPHOTO, MARIUSZ CIESEWSKI

Visegrad Group until June 30, co-organized in Tokyo the seminar "Visegrad Group and Japan — Together for Eastern Partnership." I am strongly convinced that the V4 + Japan formula of cooperation offers an even wider range of possibilities, which I hope we will see shortly.

Over the last two decades economic cooperation between Poland and Japan has become an important part of bilateral relations. The good performance of the Polish economy, its broad domestic market and easy access to other European markets, as well as a highly educated labor force together with a strong pro-Japan sentiment in Poland, have been inductive in attracting Japanese businesses to the country.

The Japanese business community is vibrant and now stands at about 300 companies, including nearly 100 manufacturers in various fields, such as the automotive industry, electronics and infrastructure. In recent years Japanese companies have shown growing interest in investing in Poland's energy sector. In terms of growth potential, the most attractive sectors for Japanese investors include mining, agriculture, food, chemicals, health care and financial services.

In order to stimulate investment, technology transfer and joint research projects in the energy sector the bilateral high-level working group on energy was inaugurated in March. On this occasion the energy seminar, addressing the most pending issues related to the Polish energy market, was organized in Tokyo. The up-to-date achievements in bilateral cooperation were recognized by awarding nine Japanese

administration and business representatives with a prestigious Polish industrial award "for contributions to the energy industry."

According to JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization), in 2012 Polish exports to Japan reached a record level of \$967 million, a 20.2 percent year-over-year increase. Due to the strong yen and economic crisis in Europe, Japanese exports to Poland shrank to \$1.7 billion, 31.3 percent year-on-year decrease, and reduced bilateral trade turnover in comparison to 2011. To better explore all business opportunities related to trade exchange with Japan, Poland looks forward to full trade liberalization (covering both tariffs and non-tariff measures) within the framework of the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement.

Poland, as a country strongly committed to promote environment-friendly policies and sustainable development, will host the 19th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP19) in November in Warsaw. The main challenge of the meeting will be to pave the

way for the new climate agreement that will enter into force in 2020.

Several R&D projects have been implemented in Poland, and the collaboration between researchers and universities in our countries is getting stronger. This autumn the Embassy of Poland in Tokyo is planning to organize an event promoting Polish-Japanese cooperation in the field of science and technology. Despite the many internationally recognized achievements of our scientists, they remain relatively unknown in Japan. Our intention is to change this by dissemination of knowledge on the possibilities of forging cooperation with Polish research institutes and R&D units. We will also aim at convincing the Japanese companies that with the relatively low salaries of Polish scientists, Poland is a perfect base for R&D centers. The favorable environment created by myriads of research institutes provides an easy-to-access, vast pool of cutting-edge technologies and ideas that can be applied in industries producing for the common European market.



Poland and Japan continue to have a very vital cultural exchange, as the interest and admiration in both countries of each other's culture remains strong. So far, four major Polish universities have established full-fledged Japanese-language departments. Additionally, almost 3,000 Poles study Japanese in private language schools. At the same time Japanese people

show a continuous interest in Polish culture and their interest in the Polish language grows as well. Japanese students may learn Polish at universities in Tokyo and Kyoto.

Throughout the last year I had a great honor and a true pleasure to assist Japanese and Polish co-organizers of various events introducing Polish cultural heritage to the Japanese public and

promoting cultural exchange between Poland and Japan. On this occasion I would like to invite you to Polish cultural events in Japan, which will be held in May and June, such as screenings of documentaries about world-famous Polish film director Roman Polanski at the Image Forum Tokyo, and screenings of documentaries by Maciej Drygas at the EU Film Days in Tokyo, as

well as performances by one of the leading Polish theatres, Teatr Polski, joining the World Theatre Festival Shizuoka under Mount Fuji.

To conclude, I find Poland and Japan close as never before. It makes me, an ambassador who started the mission to Japan last year, even more excited about the bright prospects for our relations.

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Poland
on Their National Day



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